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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001093

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FORCED MARCH ON THE BURMESE ROAD TO "DEMOCRACY"

REF: RANGOON 1057 AND 1029

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: On Sunday, September 7, SPDC Chairman Than Shwe made new appointments to the five top jobs in the National Convention Convening Commission, the first step in implementing the Burma's "roadmap" to democracy. Significantly, for the first time a member of the ruling military junta, SPDC Secretary-2 Lt Gen Thein Sein, has been appointed to the committee and will serve as the Chairman. Taken along with a recent SPDC and cabinet realignment over the previous two weeks, this newest change is strong evidence the Junta is pushing ahead with its pre-set battle plan to march down the "Burmese Road To Democracy," with the ultimate objective of appearing in the eyes of the region, if not the international community, to have a more visually acceptable form of government. Details of the new appointments are provided in paragraph 2. END SUMMARY.

#### ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENTS

[12.](#) (U) SPDC Chairman and Senior General Than Shwe announced on September 7 new leadership appointments for the National Convention Convening Commission, the 18-member body that is responsible for convening the constitutional convention and creating committees to draft the new constitution. The following are the new Commission leaders, with embassy biographical data in parenthesis:

(a) SPDC Secretary 2 Lt Gen Thein Sein, Chairman (Armed Forces Adjutant General, Former Commander of Golden Triangle Region, Head of Myanmar Economic Corporation, USDA Patron, War Veterans Organization (WVO) Organizing Committee Chairman)

(b) Chief Justice U Aung Toe, Vice-Chairman; (Chief Justice since 1988, responsible for writing the finished 1995 constitution draft, was briefly Chairman in 1996)

(c) Minister of Electric Power Maj Gen Tin Htut, Vice-Chairman; (Formerly Commander of Eastern Command HQ, USDA Executive, WVO member)

(d) Ministry of Information Brig Gen Kyaw Hsan, Secretary; and (Former Dep Commander of N.W. Command, Deputy Min of Commerce, USDA Executive and Campaign Manager, WVO member)

(e) Director of Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare Maj Gen Khin Aung Myint, Joint-Secretary (Previously Commandant of Min of Defense Compound, Dep Minister for Military affairs)

#### STEP #1 On the Burmese Road to Democracy

[13.](#) (C) This is the first time the SPDC has assigned an SPDC member to the Commission. It is also the first time they have assigned senior USDA members. With the SPDC's new S-2 as Chairman, combined with the continuing presence of Maj Gen Kyaw Win, Deputy Chief of OCMI, and Brig Gen Than Tun, Head of Office for OCMI, there is now plenty of muscle on the commission to accomplish its mission. Step One on the recently-announced Burmese Road Map for Democracy is to convene the Constitutional Convention, and it appears that Sr Gen Than Shwe has just given marching orders to the new Commission Chairman to do exactly that -- convene the constitutional convention.

#### OPTIONS FOR THE NEW CHAIRMAN

[14.](#) (C) If the new Commission Chairman does reconvene the convention, he will have three options to choose from. The committee can either reassemble the original NLD-dominated 1993 convention, reconvene the NLD-boycotted 1996 convention, or "pack the court" and convene a new body of pliable delegates appointed by the government and encompassing as

many ethnic groups as convenient. The committee will not likely go with option one above, since it means involving the NLD. Option two is more likely as it doesn't involve the NLD, and provides the appearance of being fair to non-discriminating observers. Option three is likely if option two becomes too difficult, but will give the least appearance of legitimacy as it blatantly disenfranchises those who want to participate in a genuine democratic process.

#### ETHNIC ROAD BLOCKS AHEAD?

15. (C) The first real roadblock on the "Burmese Road to Democracy" may come from the ethnic groups. The second largest opposition party in Burma, the Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD), stated this weekend it would boycott any convention that did not allow the free discussions of opinions and ideas -- which was the reason the NLD walked out of the 1993 convention in the first place. The Wa are also reportedly leery of participating in a reconvened 1996 convention. How the SPDC will clear these possible roadblocks will determine early on the legitimacy of this entire process.

#### STILL MOVING FORWARD

16. COMMENT: The generals have decided to re-package themselves as a sop to their neighbors in the region, and they will likely do it with a military-style approach that dictates actions to be taken in a set sequence -- as evidenced in the last three weeks worth of changes. However, their plan may have difficulty accounting for the unexpected. The very strong international response to reports of ASSK's hunger strike caught the SPDC flat footed and angered them into hurling charges against the U.S. of trying to upstage the Prime Minister's new road map. END COMMENT.  
Martinez